

Persons with Disabilities

Evacuation Information

This information provides a general guideline of evacuation procedures for persons with disabilities for fire and other building emergencies. Faculty, staff, students, and visitors at regional and worldwide locations should familiarize themselves with the facility they are located in and identify their primary and secondary evacuation routes and areas of refuge from each building they occupy.

Evacuation Assistant

Departments should consider assigning individuals from their department to act as an Evacuation Assistant. Generally, there should be enough volunteers for this assignment. Evacuation Assistants should be in good health and with the ability to provide the assistance needed. Departments should assign several individuals; in case someone is out. In the event of an evacuation, the Evacuation Assistant will respond to the needs of the employee with mobility issues. Evacuation Assistants can assist security and emergency personnel in ensuring a safe evacuation or provide them with valuable information as to the location and condition of the individual.

Plan in Advance

Individuals, who need assistance during an emergency situation, must plan in advance and be aware of their own capabilities and limitations.

- Be familiar with evacuation options.
- Inform your supervisor or manager that you would need assistance in an emergency, due to either a permanent or temporary condition. In order to ensure security and first responders are aware of your location, it is recommended that you notify the Office of Disability Services that you would need assistance in the event of an emergency.
- Identify the Evacuation Assistant within your department or at least 3 individuals who are willing to assist in case of an emergency.
- Familiarize your support team with your schedule, how best to assist you, how to operate any necessary equipment, etc.

Building Evacuation Options

- Exit the building immediately using building exits. If on an upper level, use stairs. Do not use elevators, unless authorized to do so by emergency personnel. In most buildings, elevators are rendered inoperable in the event of a fire emergency.
- Area of Refuge: On your own or with an Evacuation Assistant go to an area of refuge away for the obvious danger zone. The Evacuation Assistant will then go to the building evacuation refuge point outside the building and notify the on-site emergency personnel of your location. If a designated Evacuation Assistant is not available, notify a co-worker or any individual of your location and ask them to relay it to the emergency personnel. Emergency personnel will determine if further evacuation is necessary. Usually, the safest areas of refuge are pressurized stairwells. Stairwell landings are considered a "safe zone" and a safe, temporary refuge area if exiting to a ground level exit is not possible. Other possible areas of refuge include fire rated corridors or vestibules adjacent to exit stairs. Taking a position in a rated corridor next to the stair is a good alternative to a small stair landing crowded with the other building occupants using the stairway. Remain in the stairwell or corridor until assistance from the first responders. For assistance in identifying areas of refuge, call UMGC

Security at 240-684-2911 or your local property manager, campus security or military emergency services personnel.

- **Stay in Place:** Stay in Place is appropriate for individuals who are alone and unable to safely evacuate. Remain in a room with an exterior window, a telephone, and a solid or fire-resistant door. Stay in contact with emergency services by dialing 911 and reporting your location.
- Emergency services will immediately relay your location to on-site emergency personnel, who will determine the necessity for evacuation. A solid or fire-resistant door can be identified by a fire label on the jam and frame. Non-labeled 1 ¾ inch thick solid core wood doors hung on a metal frame also offer good fire resistance.

Disability Guidelines

Wheelchairs

Persons using wheelchairs should Stay in Place or move to an area of refuge when the alarm sounds. The Evacuation Assistant should then proceed to the evacuation refuge point outside the building and notify emergency personnel of the location of the person with a disability. If the person with a disability is alone, he/she should phone emergency services at 911 with their present location.

If the stair landing is chosen as the area of refuge, please note that some buildings have relatively small stair landings, and wheelchair users are advised to wait until the heavy traffic has passed before entering the stairway.

Stairway evacuation of wheelchair users should be conducted by trained professionals.

Non-Wheelchair

Persons with mobility impairments, who are able to walk independently, may be able to negotiate stairs in an emergency with minor assistance. If danger is imminent, the individual should wait until the heavy traffic has cleared before attempting the stairs. If there is no immediate danger (detectable smoke, fire, or unusual odor), the person with a disability may choose to stay in the building, using the other options, until the emergency personnel arrive and determine if evacuation is necessary.

Hearing Impaired

Most buildings are equipped with fire alarm strobe lights. In buildings with no strobe lights, individuals with hearing impairments may not hear audio emergency alarms and will need to be alerted of emergency situations. Emergency instructions can be given by writing a short explicit note to evacuate or through hand gestures.

Visually Impaired

Most people with a visual impairment will be familiar with their immediate surroundings and frequently traveled routes. Since the emergency evacuation route is likely different from the commonly traveled route, persons who are visually impaired may need assistance in evacuating. Evacuation Assistants or anyone offering assistance should offer their elbow to the individual with a visual impairment and guide him or her through the evacuation route. During the evacuation the assistant should communicate as necessary to assure safe evacuation.

Guidelines for Persons Assisting the Disabled

The following general guidelines are intended to help evacuate individuals with disabilities. However, these guidelines may not apply in every circumstance due to specific individual needs. It is important to remember that evacuation can be difficult and uncomfortable for both the rescuers and the people being assisted. Some people have conditions that can be aggravated or triggered if they are moved incorrectly. It is also important to know that environmental conditions (smoke, debris, loss of electricity) will complicate evacuation efforts. Before attempting to evacuate a person with a disability consider your options and the risk of injury to yourself and others. Do not make an emergency situation worse.

- Individuals should be invited to volunteer ahead of time to assist persons with disabilities in an emergency.
- Only trained emergency personnel should attempt to evacuate an individual who is in a wheelchair or incapable of safely navigating the stairs.
- Always ask someone with a disability how you can help. Ask how they can best be assisted or moved, and whether there are any special considerations or items that need to come with them.
- Before attempting an evacuation, volunteers and the people being assisted should discuss how any lifting will be done and where they are going.
- Do not use elevators, unless authorized to do so by emergency personnel, security or property management.
- If the situation is life threatening, call 911 and security immediately.
- Check on individuals with disabilities during an evacuation. Evacuation Assistants or co-workers should check on and ensure persons with disabilities have been alerted to the emergency.

Mobility Impairment

- It may be necessary to help clear the exit route of debris (if possible) so that the person with a disability can move out or to a safer area.
- If people with mobility impairments cannot exit, they should move to a safer area, e.g., most enclosed stairwells, an office with the door shut which is a good distance from the hazard
- Notify emergency personnel or security immediately about any mobility impaired individuals remaining in the building and their locations.
- Emergency Personnel will decide whether the individual's people are safe where they are and will evacuate them as necessary. Emergency personnel may determine that it is safe to override the rule against using elevators.

Hearing Impaired

- Get the attention of a person with a hearing impairment by touch and eye contact. Clearly state the problem. Gestures and pointing are helpful but be prepared to write a brief statement if the person does not seem to understand.
- Offer visual instructions to advise of safest route or direction by pointing toward exits or evacuation maps.

Visual Impaired

- Give verbal instructions to advise about the safest route or direction using compass directions, estimated distances, and directional terms.
- Do not grasp a visually impaired person's arm. Ask if he or she would like to hold onto your arm as you exit, especially if there is debris or a crowd.
- Give other verbal instructions or information (i.e. elevators cannot be used).

Earthquake Response

Consider your daily activities; think about how a disaster will impact your life. Take into consideration what you do independently and where you may need assistance.

Secure Your Space by identifying your hazards and securing moveable items.

When you enter a room, look for safe places to “Drop, Cover, and Hold On”

- Safe spaces are places where heavy or falling objects and breaking glass won't injure you, such as under tables or desks, along inside walls, etc.
- The more limitations you have, the more important it is to create safe spaces for yourself - especially if you cannot Drop, Cover, and Hold On under a desk, table, etc.
- Secure essential equipment such as oxygen tanks or other life support devices, so they won't fall and be damaged or cause injury.
- When you are in public places, be aware of your surroundings and identify your safe spaces.

What to do During an Earthquake

Protect yourself in the safest place possible without having to move far - no matter your limitations, you need to protect yourself as best as possible. The more limitations you have the more important it is to create safe spaces for yourself.

Do NOT try to get out of the building during an earthquake! Most people are injured by other people or falling debris as they try to exit buildings during the shaking.

Drop under a piece of furniture or against an inside wall. Take **Cover** under a desk or table if possible and protect your head and neck with one arm/hand. **Hold on** to a desk or furniture leg to keep it from shifting or uncovering you until the shaking completely stops.

Suggestions for If it is difficult to Drop, Cover, and Hold On:

- If you are in a wheelchair, recliner or bed, do not try to transfer to or from your chair during the shaking. Wait until the shaking stops to transfer.
- Stay put. Cover your head and neck with your arms or a pillow until the shaking stops.
- Wheelchair users: lock your wheels and cover your head and neck.
- If you have difficulty getting back up after dropping under a desk or table, consider other ways to protect yourself. Be sure you to have someone check on you in case you need assistance.
- If it helps – count out loud until the shaking stops. It may help keep you calm. Hearing your voice can reassure others you are okay. If you have practiced counting out loud during your drills, it can serve as a reminder for others to keep calm and remember what to do.